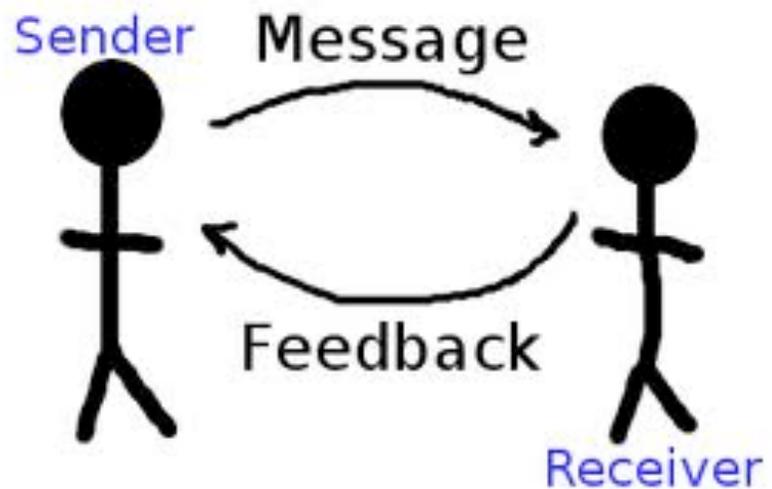

How Effectively Do You Communicate?

Use this checklist to rate your communication skills. The more effective you are, the better the outcomes you will achieve.

Focus

Do you pay complete attention to others when they are speaking? (A wandering focus discourages open communication.)



Do you manage your thoughts during a conversation, focusing them on understanding what the other person is saying? (Effective listening requires more concentration than any other form of communication. If you're thinking about anything other than what the person is saying, you're defeating your ability to understand.)

Do you postpone preparing your reply until after you have heard everything the other person has to say? (Thinking about what you plan to say while the other person is speaking prevents you from understanding what that person is saying.)

Do you ignore distractions such as other people, ambient noise, and the surroundings? (Attending to distractions makes you appear uninterested, unfocused, and rude.)

Do you make eye contact during a conversation? (Watching a person's face shows that you're paying attention. You also gather nonverbal messages, which can convey most of the important information being conveyed to you.)



Environment

Do you convey confidence, courage, and strength during your conversations? (A pleasant manner will encourage people to trust you and tell you more. Negative behavior conveys weakness, insecurity, and fear.)

Do you react calmly to bad news? (Anger frightens people into avoiding you.)

Do you encourage others to speak freely? (Appearing interested, asking questions, and treating others with respect encourages open communication.)

Do you use a diplomatic, positive vocabulary? (Talking about what you want is more forceful than talking about what you don't want, won't do, or can't do. This means that you will avoid using the word "not.")

Do you seek solutions? (Seeking approval, culprits, or excuses, discourages communication.)

Clarity

Do you stick to the subject? (Introducing new unrelated issues confuses the other person and degrades the quality of your conversation.)

Do you maintain a "you" focus? (Speak in terms of what the other person needs, wants, and understands because that enhances the impact of what you say.)

Do you avoid games? (Asking trick questions, setting traps, and making others look bad will cause people to avoid you.)

Do you use a linear, logical approach to explaining things? (Make it easy for others to understand what you're saying because it's more efficient.)

Do you use common terms? (Avoid jargon and flowery speech because these impress only the person using them.)

Effective leaders answer, "yes" to all of these questions, and that is what makes them so successful.

